

Written Testimony of Sloane Sandler, Homeless Ally
Before the Judiciary Committee
March 13, 2013

In Support of HB 6572, AAC Intimidation Based on Bigotry of Bias Against a Homeless Person

Hello and good afternoon Chairpersons Senator Coleman and Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for listening and giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Sloane Sandler and I am a UCONN MSW Intern at Hands on Hartford. I am also a Homeless Ally and a proud resident of the City of Hartford. I am here in support of the House Bill 6572. I feel it is imperative in order to ensure the safety and support of my most vulnerable neighbors.

Homelessness is an issue that can and does affect anyone. Homeless individuals are from varied educational, ethnic, socioeconomic, and family backgrounds. According to the annual statewide point-in-time-count, more than 4,000 people are homeless in Connecticut on any given night. While the cause of their conditions may be different the poor treatment and lack of support for our displaced citizens is similar.

I have had the privilege of working with homeless individuals for the past two years and have listened to a variety of personal stories accounting both verbal and physical attacks upon innocent and at risk residents. The homeless are all too often targets of abuse both in private and public arenas, during the day and at night. Resting in a public space is not warrant for abuse, however I have heard of allies being accosted, beaten, stabbed, and even shot. With a lack of medical resources, assaults only further disadvantage the homeless from any possible advancement. Whether the crime is a product of misdirected teenage angst, gang affiliations, or a random act of violence, to harm a person, most notably a person in great need, is a crime and should be treated as such. The crimes against individuals facing housing insecurity will not stop until we begin to collectively identify this abuse as injustice. Aggressors of such hate must be held accountable for these crimes. We as a community must recognize the lack of concern for the well being of our most marginalized citizens. I ask you to please consider the livelihood of an all too often ignored population in our state, and to practice compassion to help improve the safety of the homeless in Connecticut. Thank you.